Fire in ammunition depots

*72. SHRI S. AGNIRAJ:
SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) how many ammunition depots of the defence units have been destroyed in fire during the last two years;

(b) whether the Enquiry Committee Report has been received, if so, the details of the findings thereof and the action taken thereon, depot-wise;

(c) what are the main reasons for these calamities;

(d) the total loss due to these accidents; and

(e) what steps are being taken to beef-up the security in defence installations?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (e) There were four incidents of fire in ammunition Depots in the last two years. Details of estimates of loss are as under:—

Sl. No	Name of Unit	Date of Occurrence	Approximate Loss suffered (in Rs.)
1.	Ammunition Depot, Bharaptur	28 April, 2000	393 Crores
2.	Ammunition Depot, Dehu Road	3 May, 2000	Nil
3.	2 Ammunition Sub Depot (18 FAD), Mamoon, (Pathankot).	29 April, 2001	27.69 crores
4.	2 Ammunition Sub Depot (24 FAD), Birdhwal (Ganganagar)	24 May, 2001	378 crores (approx.)

Courts of Inquiries had been ordered for in all these fire incidents. Courts of Inquiry, have been completed in all cases, except that of 2 Ammunition Sub Depot (24 Field Ammunition Depot), Birdhwal (Ganganagar). The main findings/recommendations and the action taken thereon are listed as under:—

(a) **Ammunition Depot, Bharatpur (28 April, 2000):** The likely cause was due to short circuit/ sparking on pole No. 4 near Guard Post No. 11. It has,

however, not been possible to confirm this through specific, direct evidence. Two civilians died and seven civilians were injured. Administrative action, however, has been initiated against the defaulters. The Court of Inquiry has, *inter alia*, made the following recommendations:—

(1) Manpower and Equipment deficiency be made up.

(2) Strict control be maintained over cooking and heating at the Guard Post.

(3) Communications capability needs to be stepped up.

(4) Employment of Casual Labour for clearance of undergrowth be permitted.

(5) Construction of additional ammunition sheds be taken up.

Deficiency in manpower and equipment have been made up partially. Construction of 21 Explosive Store Houses for storge of ammunition is in progress. Work on perimeter fencing, and enhancement of electric and water supply have been sanctioned. Additional communication equipment has been provided.

(b) **Ammunition Depot, Dehu Road (3 May, 2000):** This was an incident of grass fire caused by high temperatures and spread by strong winds. There was no loss of any kind. No one was held responsible for the fire. The Court of Inquiry has made the following main recommendations:—

(1) Fire lanes be constructed.

(2) There shall be a ban on controlled fires.

(3) Deficiencies of fire fighting equipments be made up.

(4) Provision for casual labour/grass cutting machines be made.

The first two recommendations have been fully implemented. Work on others is in process.

(c) **2 Ammunition Sub Depot (18 FAD), Mamoon (Pathankot), 29.4.2001:** One person was injured in this incident. The Court of Inquiry made the following main recommendations:—

(1) Deficiencies in fire fighting equipment be made up.

(2) Shortage of security staff be made up.

(3) Plant and Machinery for clearance of grass be procured.

(4) Holding of unit ammunition in depots to be avoided.

(5) Storage and handling of ammunition to be as per regulations.

(6) Ammunition Regulations need updating.

(7) Gazette notification under Indian Works of Defence Act 1903, to be issued.

The Court of Inquiry has held three Officers, one JCO and three ORs responsible. The Court of Inquiry has been finalized only recently. However, departmental directions on security, fire fighting and management of ammunition have been reiterated.

(d) **2 Ammunition Sub Depot (24 FAD), Birdhwal (Ganganagar), 24.5.2001:** The cause of fire will only be ascertained after completion of the Court of Inquiry, which is under progress.

Reasons of Fire: From the reports of the various Courts of Inquiry it can be said that there was no conspiracy, nor was there any evidence that these fires were set off to cover pilferage.

The following steps have been taken to prevent such incidents in the Defence installations:—

(i) All depots have been directed to update safety and security instructions.

(ii) All depots have been inspected by a Board of Officers to check adequacy of safety and security arrangements.

(iii) Shortages in fire fighting equipment are being made up and defective equipment repaired.

(iv) Unserviceable ammunition is being disposed off on priority.

(v) Allotment of additional funds for creation of more storage accommodation, for shifting ammunition presently stored on open plinths under canvas to Explosive Stores Houses.

Wage ceiling

*73. SHRI GAYA SINGH:
SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to refer to the answer to unstarred Question 454 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 23rd November, 2000, and state: